

THE Christian History;

Containing Accounts of the Propagation and Revival
of Religion in *Great Britain, America, &c.*

Saturday DECEMBER 15. 1744. § N^o. 94.

*An Account of the late Revival of Religion at Taunton,
continued.*

THE Rev. Mr. *Wheelock* of *Lebanon* having preached at *Norton* (a Town adjoining on the *western Side* of this) on the same Day, and after Exercise was over being invited by one of our *Deacons*, came to *Taunton*: He appointed to preach a *Lecture* at the Meeting-House the next Day.---Before Meeting he sent for me but I being out of Town, at the Time appointed he went to *Lecture* and preach'd to a considerable Number of People from *Mark 16. 16.* In his Sermon among other Things, as I have been inform'd, he open'd the Nature of *Gospel-Faith*; gave some *Marks* and *Evidences* of it; shew'd the awful *Danger* of a State of *Unbelief*, &c. A considerable Number as I was informed were awaken'd & prick'd in their Hearts under his Preaching: *Zion's KING* rode in Triumph upon the Word of Truth; whereby it actually became quick & powerful, sharper than any two-edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, of the Joynts and Marrow, and was a Discerner of the Tho'ts and Intents of their Hearts. Some were constrain'd to cry out, their *Convictions* of Sin and of their Exposedness to the immediate and actual Execution of the divine Anger upon them being so sudden and piercing. (b) A far greater Number who seem'd to be tho'tful seriously concern'd

(b) The first who manifested their Distress by crying out this Day, & indeed the first who did so of this People had been
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concern'd and distress'd did not manifest their Distresses in such a publick Manner, whilst some perhaps were
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much stumbled at & prejudiced against the religious Distresses express'd in Out-cries, &c. which she had heard of from Abroad. The Reports which she had heard, together with what People said to her at Home, tended much to make her stumble at, and to prejudice her against these Things. She said, she was bro't to think that it was an evil Spirit or a Sort of Enchantment which caused them. However when she heard that the Rev. Mr. *Whitlock*, was come to *Taunton*, and was to preach a *Lecture* in the Meeting-House; notwithstanding the Prejudices which were raised in her Mind against these Things, she was resolved to go and hear him if she could. Accordingly she went; and as she was going, she says, she secretly wished that if these Things were right, she might partake in them. (Here observe that she had for some time been under some Concern but not under any clear, distinct spiritual Convictions as I could learn of her.) Accordingly in *Sermon-time* her Eyes were immediately opened to see her *Guilt* and *Danger*; and it appeared to be all Blackness and Darkeness unto her; so that she knew not which Way to turn that she might escape the *Wrath* of GOD; which she saw hanging over her. She says that she had a sort of Knowledge and Belief that CHRIST was able to save her, but dare not believe in him, being such a Sinner. (Here observe her self-righteous and legal Disposition and natural Opposition to the *New-Covenant Way of Life* by JESUS CHRIST according to the Gospel) she was afraid of going to Hell every Moment as she deserved; but yet had a *secret Hope* kept alive in her Soul in all her Distress, that it may be GOD would have Mercy on her &c. On the *Sabbath* after she was very much distress'd, especially in the Afternoon, trembling under the Word; distress'd under Conviction of *Sin* and awful Apprehensions of the *Wrath* of GOD due to her for *Sin*. After the Exercise was over, she came to Mr. *Whitlock*, as he stood out of the Doors, inquiring what she should do &c.

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inquiring what these Things meant. There was also a Word of Exhortation given by a young Candidate after Mr. *Whitlock* was gone. Upon the whole, I do

Her Distress and Anguish of Soul because of her Sin and *Danger* continued with many awful *Temptations*, as she says, till the *Sabbath sennight*; when being at Meeting in the Forenoon, she tho't she had CHRIST discovered to her by some Passages in the Sermon. (It being an instituted Mean of working Faith in the Hearts of the Elect; *Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God &c.*) Upon which Discovery, she says, her Distress was all removed immediately. 'Haw (says she) CHRIST was a compleat Saviour; just such an One as I would have chosen, were I to chuse a thousand Times. (See the Nature of a Gospel Spirit, Phil. 3.) Oh then I tho't I should have lived an Heaven upon Earth for the Time to come; a blessed Life indeed! My Sins seem'd to be subdued and gone. After this I was not angry and fretful under Crosses and Oppositions as I used to be before.' (Here observe, she says, that before this she was exceeding apt to be fretful and uneasy under Crosses &c. See here also a particular Notice taken of her *own Iniquity*) But by & by she finds her Corruptions stirring in her; complains of them, says she is burden'd with 'em, hopes she hates 'em, in her Heart sins, & longs after Purity in Heart & Life. She is examining herself & inquiring lest she should be *deceived*; tho' at the first Illumination she tho't herself sure (as I believe God ordinarily or at least often gives Assurance to young Converts, who are made to sing in the Days of their Youth) she still has her ebbings and flowings; her light and her dark Hours; sometimes distressed, at other Times rejoicing &c. she appears to live like a Christian for all that I have heard: God alone knows and searches the Heart! One also received Comfort this Day (who had been under more or less Concern of Soul for some Time before) breaking forth in the Language of the enamoured Spouse, *Cant. 2. 8.* She appears to walk answerably, and to have her Conversation as becomes the Gospel; to live near to God &c.

verily believe that this Day was a Day wherein God remarkably display'd his Power and Grace in the Assembly of his People here.

Upon my coming home that Evening and hearing what the LORD had done among this People the Day past ; my Tho'ts were fix'd upon *Rev. 3. 20.* first Clause, (altho' I had design'd to have preach'd from another Text which I had wrote from.) Accordingly I minuted down some Tho'ts that Evening, and hope had the gracious Assistance of the HOLY GHOST. The Subject appear'd to me to be seasonable; it being a Time in which the glorious REDEEMER was remarkably knocking at the Doors of Sinners Hearts, in this Town for Admittance and Entertainment,---- I think indeed it is my Duty to study my Sermons as well as I am able, and to labour to feel the Power of them upon my own Heart before I deliver them to the People, we shou'd have beaten Oil for the Sanctuary ; yet I believe Ministers may sometimes be called in Providence to preach when they have not had Opportunity for such preparatory Studies as might be their Duty at other Times, and then they may humbly look up to the HOLY SPIRIT for ; and expect his gracious Assistance answerable to their Necessities. And as Ministers should be Co-Workers with God ; so, with Humility do I desire to say, that I would always endeavour carefully to observe the particular Frames of my People, the particular Dispensations of Providence they may be called to pass under, Times of any special and remarkable Visitation from the Spirit of Grace ; the Truths which thro' Grace I may at any Time find peculiar Light, Liberty, Strength, Sweetness and Refreshment in feeding upon, and adapt my Discourses accordingly.

The next Day (which was the Lord's Day) I went to Meeting and preach'd to a large, serious and attentive Assembly. I have Reason to believe that some were under spiritual and scriptural Convictions of their Sins and Misery, and under deep and serious Concern of Soul therefor ; others (who I believe were under more than usual Thoughtfulness and Concern of Mind either from what they had seen or heard, or from both, might perhaps still be enquiring what these Things meant.

In my Sermon, among other Things, I endeavoured to speak to Sinners of the astonishing Grace and Condescension

of the dear LORD JESUS in knocking at the Door of their Hearts for Admittance and Entertainment ; of their own particular and great Concernment therein ; that now was the Day of CHRIST's Patience with 'em, which would quickly be over unless they opened to him ; that Sinners Hearts were naturally barred and bolted against the LORD JESUS ; mentioning some of those Bars and Bolts which kept CHRIST out of their Hearts, and which must be removed if ever he came in ; shew'd them what it was to open to CHRIST ; and improv'd the Discourse, giving them some Rules and Marks of Trial, whereby they might examine themselves whether they had open'd to CHRIST yea or nay, and apply'd it as closely and pathetically to Saints and Sinners according to their particular Concernments therein, as I could.

The Word was attended with Power, and some were pricked in their Hearts by it, as I afterwards learned. Tho' indeed I observ'd no visible Manifestations of their Conviction of their Sin, and Distress of Mind therefor in the Time of public Exercise, other than an awful Concern, and Solemnity which was evident in most, or all of their Countenances. I think, I never saw such an Assembly before ; such awful Reverence, such serious Concern of Mind, such diligent Attention, such Engagedness and Fixedness of Mind, under the Word as appear'd among the People. Let all the Praise and Honour be given to the GOD of all Grace, whose Glory fill'd the Temple, and the Power of whose Word most or all felt in a greater or less Degree this Day ! I desire not to speak of these Things, and others of the like Nature which may hereafter be mentioned, that either I or others may have whereof to glory save in the LORD, who was pleased to magnify his Grace and Strength in the Weakness of the Instrument ! Oh may I continually be humbled and broken under the Workings of latent Pride, &c. May I forever be made and kept humble under a spiritual Conviction of my own Nothingness, Vileness and Unworthiness, and be enabled to give the GOD of all Grace (who is jealous for his own Honour and Glory, and will not give his Glory to another, nor his Praise to graven Images) all the Honour and Glory of any Thing he has been pleased, or may still be pleased, to work in me, by me or for me.

It is the plain Preaching of the Gospel of a crucified JESUS, not with Words and Reasonings which Men's Wisdom teacheth,

eth, but which the HOLY GHOST teacheth, that God has been pleased to honour and bless in the late remarkable Day of his People's Visitation in this Town, and in other Places so far as I have been acquainted with them.

At Noon I went to my usual Place of Retirement. Some of the People came to the House also, and appear'd to be under Concern of Mind. I gave them a Word of Exhortation, and hope it was not in vain. About this Time nothing which was said to People seem'd in vain.

In the Afternoon at the usual Time I went to Meeting, and Mr. Wheelock preached to a crowded Assembly from *Job* 27. 8. In his Sermon, he endeavoured to detect the Hypocrite; to shew how far a Person might go, what he might do, and what he might experience, and nevertheless be nought but a very Hypocrite; to represent to them the awful Danger and Folly of Hypocrisy &c. to urge it upon them that they would be willing to know themselves before it was too late; that whatever they might gain by their Hypocrisy in this World, as Credit among Men &c. would be all lost in that Day, when God should take away their Souls, and they be stripped and stand naked before the inlightned and awful Tribunal of a holy and jealous God, to their everlasting Shame and Contempt &c. His Sermon was close, searching, experimental, awful and awakening. The visible Effects of it upon the People, were an awful Concern and Solemnity which appear'd in their Countenances in general, and one or two trembled under it. Surely God was with him; he appear'd to speak of spiritual and divine Things as awful Realities. Many I doubt not, could witness to the Truth of his Sermon, by finding their Hearts discovered and read to them therein. The Kingdom of Darkness trembled, I trust, before the Gospel of CHRIST, dispensed by this his dear Servant!

He appointed to preach another Sermon after a small Intermission, and accordingly did. Many of this People tarried to hear him. He preached from *Hos.* 13. 13. He opened the Connection and the Text itself, and then observed that inasmuch as he was about to leave them on the Morrow, and there were a Number under Convictions, he would point out some Things which were oftentimes Means of hindring Persons Convictions from issuing in Conversion, or made them tarry long in the Place of breaking forth of Children. Accordingly

cordingly he mention'd some of them ; as the *World*, and putting off *Convictions* till a more convenient Season &c. He gave some Account of the various *Workings* and *Lustings* of the Sinners Heart whilst under *Convictions* towards forbidden Objects, towards false resting Places. He was delivering his Discourse very *pleasantly* and *moderately* ; but Oh an increased Power and Authority accompanied it, a Power and Authority too big, awful and majestick, for any Creature ; it was the Voice of GOD which is powerful and full of Majesty ! The great COMFORTER, whose Office it is to convince the World of *Sin*, of *Righteousness*, and of Judgment, to teach his Disciples all Things, and bring all Things to their Remembrance, accompanied the Word with his almighty and efficacious Grace ! Oh it discovered the Secrets of Mens Hearts to them with irresistible Energy, Light and Evidence ! Indeed he spake in the Demonstration of the SPIRIT and with Power, so that one must say, GOD was with him of a Truth ! By and by some began to cry out both above and below in awful Distress and Anguish of Soul : Upon which he raised his Voice that he might be heard above their Outcries ; but the Distress and Out-cry spreading and increasing, his Voice was at length so drowned that he could not be heard. Wherefore not being able to finish his Sermon, with great apparent *Serenity* and *Calmness* of Soul (having mentioned it to me) he called to the Distress'd, and desir'd them to gather themselves together in the Body of Seats below. This he did that he might with more Convenience converse with them, counsel, direct, exhort them, &c.

Oh how were Sinners in Zion afraid ! How did Fearfulness surprize the Hypocrite ! Whilst they saw their State, and saw no Way open'd to them, how they could dwell with the devouring Fire, how they could inhabit with the everlasting Burnings ! Whilst they saw no Way how they could approach unto the holy and jealous GOD ! Oh the Distress and Anguish of their Souls ! Oh the Pains that were upon them, like as of a Woman in Travail ; whilst they saw their just Deserts at the Hands of the great GOD ; whilst they knew not but that, yea were awfully afraid lest, they must eternally dwell with Devils and damned Souls in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone, and bear the Fury of GOD, with whom now they saw was terrible Majesty !

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Seeing somewhat of the Awfulness of *Hell*, and that they deserv'd it ; seeing also that nothing but the mere uncovenanted good Pleasure of GOD, who was very angry with them, kept them out of *Hell* every Moment : No Wonder that they cry out, they should go to *Hell*, they were going to *Hell*, *What shall we do to be saved ?* &c.

(To be continued.)

Saturday, November 24. The Rev. Mr. *Whitefield* was so far reviv'd as to be able to take Coach, with his *Consort*, and set out from *Portsmouth* to *Boston* ; whether he came in a very feeble State, the *Monday Evening* after : since which he has been able to preach in several of our largest Houses of public Worship, particularly the Rev. Dr. *Colman's*, Dr. *Sewall's*, Mr. *Webb's*, and Mr. *Gee's*, to crowded Assemblies of People, and to great and growing Acceptance. At Dr. *Colman's* Desire, and the Consent of the Church, on the *Lord's-Day* after his Arrival, he administred to them the Holy Communion. And last *Lord's-Day* he preach'd for the venerable Mr. *Cheever* of *Chelsea*, and administred the Holy Supper there : The next Day preach'd for the Rev. Mr. *Emerson* of *Malden* : Yesterday he set out to preach at some Towns to the Northward, proposes to return hither the next Wednesday Evening, and after a few Days, to comply with the earnest Invitations of several Ministers, to go and preach to their Congregations, in the Southern Parts of the Province.

He comes with the same extraordinary Spirit of Meekness, Sweetness and universal Benevolence as before : In Opposition to the Spirit of *Separation* and *Bigotry*, is still for holding Communion with all Protestant Churches. In Opposition to *Enthusiasm*, he preaches a close Adherence to the Scriptures, the Necessity of trying all Impressions by them, and of rejecting whatever is not agreeable to them, as Delusions. In Opposition to *Antinomianism*, he preaches up all Kinds of relative and religious Duties, tho' to be perform'd in the Strength of CHRIST, and in short, the Doctrines of the Church of *England*, & the first Fathers of this Country. As before, he first applies himself to the *Understandings* of his *Hearers*, & then to the *Affections* : And the more he preaches, the more he convinces People of their Mistakes about him, and increases their Satisfaction.